

Mr. SKEEN. If the gentleman will yield, we would like to finish title I, if we can. We will test the waters.

Mr. OBEY. We will not go beyond title I?

Mr. SKEEN. No, we will not, unless we get a chance to.

Mr. OBEY. If the gentleman will yield further, I also thought the understanding was that there would be no further action taken after 10:15 p.m.

Mr. SKEEN. That is correct. I am sorry I did not mention that to the gentleman, but 10:15, we will try to wind it up here this evening by as early as 10:15. There will be only one vote.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1976, and that I be allowed to include extraneous and tabular material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 188 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1976.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1976) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, with Mr. KLUG in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] will be recognized for 30 minutes, and the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN] will be recognized for 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to bring before the House today H.R. 1976, which makes appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and related agencies.

Before I begin in this discourse, I would like to say that I appreciate very much the opportunity to serve once again with the distinguished Member of this body, Mr. DURBIN, as my ranking member. He was my chairman in our life a year or so ago, and it has been a real pleasure and it is a real compliment to me that he would come back on this committee as the ranking member.

I also want to thank the members of the committee that have worked so hard and diligently and given of themselves to this process, and also the great staff that we have that support us all. I want them to know that I appreciate all their help, all their associations in the work we have done. I think the work product will reveal the quality of that work.

Mr. Chairman, I know many of my colleagues think of this simply as the Agriculture appropriations bill. It does, of course, provide funds for the very diverse activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, but its scope reaches every American citizen and goes far beyond the borders of this great country.

Before I begin, I want to say we have been living in sin for a certain great span of time, Mr. Chairman. That is, as the Committee on Appropriations, we have poached on the area of the authorizing committee, so we have decided to have a prenuptial agreement and divide this territory up and to get a property settlement and so on.

But, anyway, we are working together, and I am delighted to have the cooperation of the House Agriculture Authorization Committee. We understand the problems that we have had to go through to make this an equitable and very harmonious situation, and we hope that it continues.

This bill provides funds for:

A system of agriculture which allows less than 2 million farmers and ranchers to produce a safe and abundant supply of food for nearly 250 million Americans and others around the world;

Research programs at our universities, which keep us the most competitive producer of agricultural products in the world;

The Food and Drug Administration's efforts to ensure safe supplies of foods, drugs, and medical devices;

A wide variety of domestic feeding and nutrition programs, including food stamps, the Women, Infants and Children feeding program, known as WIC, and food distribution programs for the elderly and homeless, some 26 nutritional or feeding programs we handle on a renewable basis every session of this Congress;

Housing and economic development programs, rural areas which provide not only shelter, but also create jobs and economic activity throughout the country;

Export programs for bulk products and processed foods which this year will reach a record \$50 billion, generating millions of jobs in the production, processing, and transportation indus-

tries, and contributing to yet another year of agricultural export trade surpluses;

And food aid for developing countries and for emergencies such as the tragic situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Chairman, this bill is the result of 8 weeks of hearings in which 325 witnesses testified, for which we have 7 volumes of hearings available to the public, covering every detail of the programs covered by this legislation.

The bill totals \$62.5 billion, which is \$5.5 billion less than fiscal year 1995, and \$4.4 billion less than the President's request.

Mandatory spending is 80 percent of the bill and totals \$49.2 billion. Discretionary spending is 20 percent of the bill and totals \$13.3 billion, which is \$1.6 billion less than the President's request and \$85.5 million less than the current year's spending.

The bottom line is we are right on our discretionary allocation for both budget authority and outlays.

Mr. Chairman, there are very few accounts in this bill which have not been reduced or frozen at current levels of spending. I would like to remind my colleagues that this comes on top of nearly 10 percent in cuts in the fiscal year 1995 bill.

There are few small but essential increases in the bill including:

The food safety and inspection service which protects every one of us as consumers;

Conservation technical assistance for farmers as well as rural and urban communities;

Guaranteed loans for rural housing which help offset a large cut in direct loans; and

Money for USDA to begin an information sharing program to support the Department's plan to close field offices and consolidate operations which actually saves money in the long run.

There is an additional \$260 million for the Women, Infants and Children's program, known as WIC, but this does not, and I repeat does not, provide for an increase in the program. It only maintains program participation at the end of the fiscal year 1995 level of 7.3 million individuals.

Otherwise, we have made large cuts in rural housing and development programs, freezing other accounts at current year levels, and eliminating some entirely.

Mr. Chairman, there is no money for university construction, either for new buildings or to complete ongoing projects. More than 80 special research and extension programs have been eliminated.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the bill provides for current level funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and allows the Rural Telephone Bank to begin privatization.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take a minute to explain the difficulty in comparing this year's accounts with last year's. As most of you know, the USDA is the first Federal department